



MATTERS OF OPINION



Dean Hildebrand
Director

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In this issue of *North Dakota OUTDOORS* you'll find an interesting overview of the fishing opportunities we have in our great state. The number of lakes we manage, predictions of what anglers can expect in 2005, and praise and concern for our rivers, streams, lakes and reservoirs are featured inside.

Our Game and Fish Department fisheries folks do an exceptional amount of work to ensure that we have the best fishing opportunities possible. Mother Nature, of course, plays a mighty role in providing or taking away the necessary ingredients needed to sustain our fisheries. Our friends in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service run our fish hatcheries at Garrison Dam and at Valley City, and without their special effort we could not carry out our management plan. We owe them a debt of gratitude, as well as those many other important people who manage our dams, wildlife refuges and waterfowl production areas.

Our hats are also off to private landowners, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, North Dakota State Land Department, North Dakota Department of Agriculture, State Water Commission, State Parks and Recreation Department, cities and counties. By working together we are able to share costs, save money and provide the best services possible to the public. Through this spirit of cooperation, we have some wonderful fisheries in North Dakota, providing all of us with yet another reason to get outdoors.

Some of us can remember our first days on the water when we used a bamboo pole, cotton string for line, a cork for a float and an old iron nut for a sinker. A hook adorned with a worm, beef steak, liver, minnow or a grasshopper usually caught most anything our waters had to offer. It didn't take us long to graduate to a bait-casting reel on a metal rod, followed by a spinning reel and rod.

Today, tackle stores take hours to peruse and fishing catalogs are 3 inches thick. And we haven't even talked about electronics, boats and motors.

For those of us who may want to slow down a bit, yet continue to expand our fishing horizons, I suggest taking a serious look at fly-fishing. If you give it a fair try, I'm betting you'll soon be hooked. You can purchase the necessary equipment at a nominal fee. Getting started isn't as daunting as a person might assume as there are large collections of books and videotapes explaining equipment needs, casting basics, and so on. Better yet, there is likely an experienced pool of fly-anglers near you to help you get started. North Dakota has more than one fly-fishing club in the state; the Missouri Valley Fly Fishers Club (www.mvffclub.com) of the Bismarck-Mandan area is one of them. This group is made up of dedicated people willing to share their knowledge and experience, and help you catch a fish or two along the way.

The list of fish in North Dakota that can be taken with a fly rod is long. From pike to panfish to walleye to trout to white bass to smallmouth bass. A whole new dimension of fishing opens when you pick up a fly rod. The list of places to cast a Woolly Bugger, Prince Nymph or the occasional dry fly to unsuspecting fish is even longer. Dozens of our waters across the state are stocked with trout, the species of fish typically pursued with fervor by fly-rodgers.

One day we could see Harmon Lake added to the list of destinations visited by fly-rodgers and other anglers in search of a quality stillwater fishing experience. My vision for this 100-plus acre fishery-in-the-making is as a blue ribbon trout fishery, managed specifically for trout. Located 10 miles north of Mandan in Morton County, Harmon Lake could become a premier destination for those lured by the rings of rising trout.

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